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# U.S. Said to Seek Second Delay on Sentencing Spy

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 24 — The Justice Department has decided to seek another delay in the sentencing of John A. Walker Jr. because of concern that the Navy veteran may have lied about his Soviet espionage ring, Reagan Administration officials said today.

The sentencing of Mr. Walker and his son, Michael, who was a Navy seaman, had been scheduled for Oct. 3. The two men pleaded guilty to espionage last year.

The officials said the Justice Department would ask a Federal district judge in Baltimore, where the case has been prosecuted, for an additional delay while prosecutors study John Walker's accounts of his espionage career.

The department has confirmed that polygraph, or lie-detector, examinations found Mr. Walker was deceptive when questioned about the origin and membership of the spy ring.

The officials said the decision to seek a delay was prompted in large part by the Navy. They said that naval officials raised questions in recent days about the need to honor a plea agreement with Mr. Walker, in light of concern about his truthfulness.

Under a plea agreement that could hasten parole, John Walker was to receive a sentence of life in prison and his son was to be given a 25-year term.

John Walker's Soviet espionage operation, which also included his brother Arthur and Jerry A. Whitworth, a Navy colleague, involved

naval communications and has been described by the Government as one of the most damaging in the nation's history.

Mr. Walker's chief defense lawyer, Fred Warren Bennett, has indicated he would oppose any move to postpone the date of sentencing.

In an interview last Friday, Mr. Bennett said he would oppose a delay because prosecutors had already been given enough time to study the case. Mr. Bennett was out of his office today and did not return telephone calls.

The Justice Department's decision to seek a delay could cause several problems for prosecutors.

The sentencing date has already been delayed once, and the judge in the case, Alexander Harvey, is well known for his reluctance to postpone judicial proceedings.

Law-enforcement officials said that the United States Attorney's office in Baltimore was expected to request the delay at a meeting with Judge Harvey early next week.

## Earlier Delay Granted

John Walker and his son were originally scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 28. But at the request of prosecutors, Judge Harvey agreed to delay the sentencing until Oct. 3.

The decision to seek a another delay in the sentencing was one of several recent developments in the case.

Administration officials said that over the last several days Mr. Whitworth underwent a series of intensive interrogations and polygraph examinations in California, where he was convicted of espionage charges last summer.

Arthur Walker was to be returned to Baltimore shortly to face additional Justice Department questions about the origins of the espionage ring, the officials said.

Law-enforcement officials said the statements from Mr. Whitworth and Arthur Walker would be used to verify or disprove accounts offered by John Walker.

According to the officials, the Justice Department is concerned that Mr. Walker, to protect himself or possibly others, has lied about the amount of damage done by the spy ring.

They said they also feared that Arthur Walker began his spying career while in the Navy. Arthur Walker has denied it, but the officials said that he had also been found to be deceptive when questioned about the origins of the spy ring.

Administration officials said there appeared to be a battle brewing between the Justice Department and the Defense Department over the handling of the case.

Justice Department officials have indicated that they lacked sufficient evidence to ask Judge Harvey to overturn the plea bargain. Polygraph results would not be sufficient, they said.

But according to Administration officials, the Navy believes there is adequate evidence to prove that Mr. Walker is lying.